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homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT
OF AGRICULTURE

Friday, April 28, 1944

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In 3 Hh

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SUBJECT: "The Fat Situation" Information from Office of Distribution officials
of the War Food Administration

Jack Sprat and his wife followed a very good wartime practice when they licked their platter clean...especially when Mrs. Sprat ate the fat. For fats and oils are important foods...and they're also important in some industries as well. But our supply of fats and oils cannot possibly meet the huge demand for them. That's why the supply of fats and oils has to be divided up among all the groups that need them...the armed services, vital war industries, our Allies, and civilians....and that's why our civilian supply of fats and oils has to be rationed.

Now how much fat will we civilians have this year? Well we'll average at least 44 pounds each. That includes butter, margarine, shortening, lard, and salad oils...and also the fat in mayonnaise, salad dressings, and bakery products. There also will be enough fat for our soap needs and for basic necessities like paints, linoleum, and so forth. If we didn't have any restrictions like rationing...people would want to buy more than fifty pounds of edible fats. Our supply just wouldn't stretch that far, and meet essential war needs, too.

And we're a lucky people. In England, the fat ration is only 42 pounds per person...and they don't have the advantage of some of the unrationed fats we have, like peanut butter. In Russia, of course, the fat allowance is a good deal less than half what ours is. As a matter of fact, we actually had about 46 pounds of fat last year...because of extra bonuses of fat. And this year we'll probably get a bit more...because of being able to buy lard point free this month.

Speaking of lard, some folks have asked why we still had to save waste fats, when lard had a zero point value. Well, there's no real connection between the lard

situation and fat salvage. Lard was given a point value of zero because of the tremendous rush of hogs to slaughter...which meant a great quantity of pork products, like lard, on the market. Of course, some lard was set aside for storage...but there isn't enough storage room to hold it all. That's why the Government had to reduce the point value of lard to zero. From a long-run point of view, we're still short on fat...and lard wouldn't have been made point free if we'd been able to take care of it another way. Salvaged fat is something else again...we need those waste fats for industrial uses and soap-making...to take the place of oils we used to import.

And that brings up another phase of the fat story. Before the war we were the biggest importer of fats and oils...and now we're one of the biggest exporters. And here's why.

Before the war we imported huge quantities of coconut and palm oils from the Philippines and the East Indies. We used both these oils in soap and in foods like margarine. But now we can't get enough of these for soap and also meet our industrial requirements. As far as our total fat supply was concerned, we were able to replace those oils with more of the soybean and linseed oils we produce over here. But soybean and linseed oils can't be used in their natural form for making soap...where those oils from the Philippines and East Indies can. And the fat situation looked pretty black for a while.

That's when fat salvage began. Salvaged fats are very good for making soap, and for other industrial uses...for example, lubricants, cutting oils, incendiary bombs, and synthetic rubber. The fat situation began to look up, as soon as homemakers started salvaging as much fat as they could.

We're still importing some soap-making and industrial oils from the United Nations' pool. But we're also using a good deal of the salvaged fat for the things we used the oils from the Philippines and East Indies for. And that means we can export some of our edible oils. Our Allies Great Britain and Russia had their customary supplies of fats and oils cut off. Great Britain could no longer count on the East Indies...Russia wasn't able to get them from her usual source in Ukraine.

So we've had to share with them the fats and oils we could spare. As a matter of fact, it's more than just sharing. As far as England is concerned, we're exchanging our edible oils for the industrial and soap-making oils she can get. If we didn't, we would have to make soap out of our edible oils.

We're also sending Russia some linseed oil, which the Russians use for cooking. And we stick a little soap into Red Cross prisoner of war packages.....and those go right to our own men.

But this year's production of fats and oils is only just getting under way. Part of the picture looks good -- for example, our supplies of lard and of soybean oil -- but we still don't know how much oil will actually be produced this year. That's why we mustn't waste a drop, of lard, or any other fat. Buy it and use it when you need it. Remember that we are sharing our supply of fats and oils with our fighting men, with our neighbors, with our Allies. And keep right on saving your waste fats...for it's more important than it ever was. If it weren't crucially important... you wouldn't get back money and ration points for each pound you turn in. And in the long run you get back something else, too. For every pound of fat you save and turn in to your butcher, you also get back nearly two pounds of soap.

